

Message Text

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PAGE 01 GABORO 02770 081158Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 AGRE-00 EB-08 DHA-00
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R 080610Z NOV 77
FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0999
INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
KXMISSION USUN 0493

C O N F I D E N T I A L GABORONE 2770

SALISBURY: FROM SEITZ

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDEV UK RH
SUBJ: RHODESIA: MEETING WITH THE NATIONAL FARMERS UNION

1. SUMMARY: THE FARMERS UNION IS DOUBTFUL ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THEIR FARMS UNDER A CONSTITUTION WHICH PROVIDES FOR LAND REFORM BUT NOT FOR GUARANTEED COMPENSATION. THEY WANT TO BELIEVE THAT INDEPENDENCE CAN WORK BUT FEAR THAT IT JUST WON'T. END SUMMARY

2. ON THE AFTERNOON OF NOV 4, GRAHAM AND I MET WITH OFFICERS OF THE RHODESIAN NATIONAL FARMERS UNION LED BY JOHN STRONG. THE DISCUSSION COVERED MANY TOPICS AND OCCASIONALLY WANDERED INTO QUESTIONS OF SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS AND THE TRANSITION. GRAHAM CLARIFIED SEVERAL POINTS ABOUT THE PROPOSED INDEPENDENCE CONSTITUTION AND TOLD THE FARMERS THAT HMG WOULD PUBLISH A DETAILED WHITE PAPER BEFORE THE PARTIES WOULD BE EXPECTED FINALLY TO AGREE TO A STATEMENT. SMITH COULD PUT THESE FINAL PROPOSALS

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PAGE 02 GABORO 02770 081158Z

TO A REFERENDUM IF HE WISHED. THE FARMERS IN TURN RAISED TWO SUBJECTS OF CONCERN: LAND REFORM AND COMPENSATION.

3. LAND REFORM, THEY ARGUED, IS UNNECESSARY AND A POLITICAL SIGNAL FOR AN INDEPENDENT GOVERNMENT TO TAKE OVER WHITE FARMS. GRAHAM SAID A LAND REFORM PROGRAM WOULD AFFECT ONLY THOSE PRIVATELY OWNED AREAS WHICH ARE VACANT AND UNUTILIZED. THE

GOVERNMENT COULD EXPROPRIATE THESE AT ORIGINAL PURCHASE PRICE FOR REDISTRIBUTION TO AFRICAN FARMERS. DEVELOPED LAND, WHICH INCLUDES THE LARGE STOCK RANCHES, COULD ONLY BE EXPROPRIATED AT THE MARKET VALUE. THE FARMERS SEEMED PARTIALLY REASSURED BY THIS EXPLANATION BUT STILL FOUND THE DEFINITION OF UNDEVELOPED LAND TOO IMPRECISE.

4. STRONG AND THE OTHERS EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT A POST-INDEPENDENCE SITUATION IN WHICH THEIR FARMS WERE GRADUALLY RUN DOWN BY GENERAL LAWLESSNESS -- STOCK RAIDING, SQUATTERS, ETC -- AND IN WHICH THEY COULD NEITHER SELL THEIR FARMS NOR EXPECT THEM TO BE EXPROPRIATED WITH COMPENSATION. THEY WOULD SIMPLY GO BANKRUPT. THE UNION ASKED FOR ASSURANCES THROUGH THE ZIMBABWE DEVELOPMENT FUND. WE EXPLAINED THAT THE SORT OF SCHEMES THEY HAD IN MIND WOULD NOT BE ACCEPTABLE TO ZDF DONOR COUNTRIES. WE ALSO ARGUED THAT A SETTLEMENT SHOULD MEAN AN END TO LAWLESSNESS WHILE NO SETTLEMENT WOULD MEAN A GRADUALLY DETERIORATING SITUATION. THE FARMERS WERE SKEPTICAL.

5. COMMENT: THE FARMERS FEEL ESPECIALLY VULNERABLE TO THE UNCERTAINTIES OF INDEPENDENCE. THEY SEE THEMSELVES POSSIBLY AS ISOLATED TARGETS FOR POPULAR VENGEANCE OR AS UNPROTECTED VICTIMS OF AN INDIFFERENT GOVERNMENT. THEIR ASSETS ARE NOT EASILY SOLD OFF OR PACKED UP. THE FARMERS UNION SAYS IT ACCEPTS THE NEED FOR AN INTERNATIONALLY ENDORSED SETTLEMENT BUT THAT STABLE GOVERNMENT WILL IN LARGE MEASURE DEPEND ON MAJOR CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 GABORO 02770 081158Z

COMMERCIAL AGRICULTURE. TO STAY IN RHODESIA, THE FARMERS WANT CONFIDENCE IN THE FUTURE AND ARE NOW LOOKING FOR SOME MECHANISM BEYOND THE WHITE PAPER WHICH CAN PROTECT THEIR INTERESTS. WITHOUT THESE INCENTIVES THEY PROBABLY FEEL AT LEAST FOR THE MOMENT THAT INDEPENDENCE IS JUST TOO RISKY A PROPOSITION. STILL, IT IS THE FARMER IN THE WHITE CIVILIAN COMMUNITY WHO IS SUFFERING THE MOST FROM THE FIGHTING, MARAUDING AND DIS-LOCATIONS. THEIR REPRESENTATIVES WERE NOT DEFIANT BUT ANXIOUS, AND THEY NEED MORE PERSUADING THAT FARMERS ARE LIKELY TO BE BETTER OFF WITH A SETTLEMENT THAN WITHOUT ONE.
NORLAND

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Message Attributes

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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
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Disposition History: n/a
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